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COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

Tenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 147th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 26 April 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. VOYAME

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* The summary record of the first part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.147.

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The public meeting was called to order at 12.50 p.m.

PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (agenda item 9) (continued)

1. Mr. El Ibrashi resumed his place on the Committee.

2. Mr. El IBRASHI, who had represented the Committee against Torture at the Regional Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights, stressed the importance of the Committee attending such meetings. At the meeting in Bangkok, he had made a statement setting out the work and objectives of the Committee and had held various consultations with representatives of a number of States, some of which were parties to the Convention against Torture and others not.

3. The Meeting had been opened by the Prime Minister of Thailand, thus testifying to the importance attached by Thailand and by all to the issue. There had been a very large attendance, including 34 States acting as full participants, 25 States represented by observers (including most European countries), the majority of specialized agencies, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, the Committee against Torture and hundreds of non-governmental organizations.

4. As far as substantive issues were concerned, a conflict of opinion had rapidly emerged between the developing countries and the Western countries over the manner in which the question of human rights should be addressed; the developing countries had stressed the importance of economic and social rights and demanded that the Western countries should refrain from exerting political pressure under the pretext of human rights, whereas the Western countries had given priority to civil and political rights.

5. Japan alone of the Asian countries had stood apart; it had rebutted the argument advanced by the developing countries, considering that underdevelopment could not serve as a pretext for failure to respect human rights.

6. He was reluctant to speak of a confrontation, although there had been tension, particularly in respect of Palestine, when Syria, for example, had insisted that a resolution should be adopted on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

7. He again emphasized that it was extremely important for the Committee against Torture to be represented at such meetings, and deplored the fact that the Committee had not attended the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, which must certainly have been just as valuable as the Bangkok Meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.